

I. PERMITS²

To fish recreationally in federal waters for any Atlantic HMS, and within the waters of most Atlantic coastal states for Atlantic tunas,³ vessel owners must have a valid federal fishing permit for their vessel. The type of permit depends on the fish species, fishing gear, and fishing trip. The four types (or categories) of permits that can be used to recreationally fish for Atlantic HMS are HMS Angling, HMS Charter/Headboat, Atlantic Tunas General category, and Swordfish General Commercial permit. All passengers on board a vessel with one of these valid HMS permits may recreationally fish for Atlantic HMS under applicable conditions. **Only one of these four permits can be issued to a vessel in a calendar year, except that a vessel can be issued both an Atlantic Tunas General category and Swordfish General Commercial permit. Permit holders may only change permit category within 45 days of the permit issuance date, as long as no fish were landed in that time period.**⁴ Please refer to each species section for specific species and gear restrictions.

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| HMS Angling | This permit is strictly for recreational fishing (i.e., no sale) and is issued to the vessel owner for a specific vessel. |
| HMS Charter/Headboat | This permit is required for vessels taking for-hire passengers recreational fishing for Atlantic HMS. See Section VIII for detailed information. |
| Atlantic Tunas General category | This is a commercial fishing permit for Atlantic tunas, but can be used for fishing recreationally for all HMS only when participating in a registered HMS tournament. ⁵ See Section IX for more information. |
| Swordfish General Commercial | This is a commercial fishing permit for Atlantic swordfish, but can be used for fishing recreationally for all HMS only when participating in a registered HMS tournament under certain restrictions. ⁶ See Sections V and IX for more information. |

To acquire or renew an HMS recreational fishing permit, anglers must complete either an initial or a renewal permit application at <http://hmspermits.noaa.gov> or by calling (888) 872-8862 to request an application package by fax or mail.

Where do the Federal regulations apply?⁷

Federal recreational fishing regulations apply in federal waters and on the high seas, and may apply to recreational fishing in state waters. Anglers possessing a federal HMS fishing permit who are fishing in state waters must follow federal regulations for HMS, unless the state regulations are more restrictive, in which case the state regulations apply. Anglers who are planning on fishing in state waters should be familiar with the state regulations for specific species and situations. A list of state agency contacts is in Section XI.